

Preview (cont. from page 1)

youngsters from our farm system to play major roles at the big league level this season.

Our starting rotation is anchored by **RHP CHARLES NAGY**. Charlie has been our most consistent starter over the last three seasons on his way to becoming one of the dominant starting pitchers in the American League. **RHP OREL HERSHISER**, **RHP JACK McDOWELL**, and **RHP CHAD OGEA** will assume the second through fourth spots in our rotation. Hershiser and McDowell had

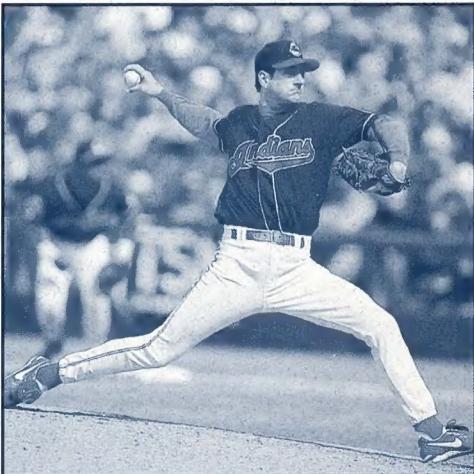


Photo: Gregory Drezdzon

solid seasons in 1996, and Chad Ogea established himself as a quality starter at the ML level. **LHP BRIAN ANDERSON**, **RHP's ALBIE LOPEZ and BARTOLO COLON** will battle for the fifth spot in the starting five. **RHP TRAVIS DRISKILL**, and **LHP's MIKE MATTHEWS and CASEY WHITTEN** should all pitch in starting roles at AAA Buffalo in '97.

Our bullpen should be among the best in baseball. When we didn't land one of the superior free agent starters, we instead improved an already strong bullpen. Returning will be ace closer **JOSE MESA**. From the right side we have two set-up men who are among the best in the business in **RHP ERIC PLUNK** and the newly acquired **RHP MIKE JACKSON**. **RHP PAUL SHUEY** emerged into a quality Major League reliever last season and will also assume a major role in the bullpen from the right side. The left-handed side of our bullpen is again manned by veteran **LHP PAUL ASSENMACHER**. No reliever has been more reliable in this decade than Assie. Hard-throwing **LHP ALAN EMBREE** will be



Photo: Gregory Drezdzon

counted on this season to get left-handed batters out. **RHP DANNY GRAVES**, one of our top prospects, will compete for a Major League job at Spring Training.

LHP STEVEN KLINE and **RHP MAXIMO DeLaROSA** will also pitch out of the bullpen at Buffalo this year.

Our infield has been bolstered by the acquisition of **3B MATT WILLIAMS**, a three-time Gold Glove award winner and four-time All-Star. Williams and a healthy **SS OMAR VIZQUEL**, who has four Gold

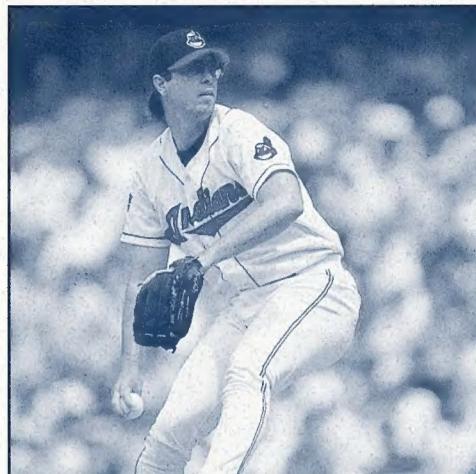


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Gloves of his own and hit .297 with 35 steals in '96, can do it with the bat as well as the glove and will make up the best left side in baseball today. **1B JIM THOME** will move across the diamond to first. He has developed into one of the league's toughest outs over the last two years. Newly acquired **TONY FERNANDEZ** along with youngsters **ENRIQUE WILSON** and **DAMIAN JACKSON** will battle for the second base job at Spring Training. Fernandez is an established Major

League veteran while Wilson and Jackson both have a tremendous amount of talent. **SANDY ALOMAR** will again handle the bulk of the catching duties with **PAT BORDERS** as the backup behind Sandy. **CF KENNY LOFTON** will anchor our outfield. Kenny is coming off a club record

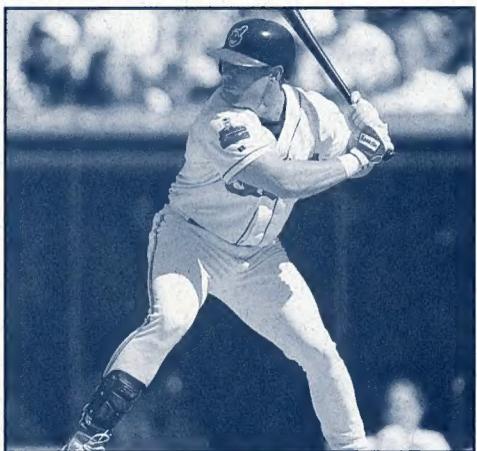


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75-steal season and scored 132 runs in the leadoff spot last year. He is one of the most dynamic players in the game today.

RF MANNY RAMIREZ is coming off back-to-back 30 HR, 100+ RBI seasons and will again be counted on for his offensive production. He is also developing into a fine rightfielder. **OF BRIAN GILES**, who hit .355 in the second half last year, and **OF KEVIN MITCHELL**, the 1989 NL MVP, will share time in left field. Newly acquired **OF CHAD CURTIS** can play all three outfield positions and will be our fourth outfielder. **BRUCE AVEN, ALEX RAMIREZ, and TRENIDAD HUBBARD** play outfield in Buffalo in '97. Each have the ability to play at the Major League level.

JULIO FRANCO, KEVIN SEITZER, and Mitchell will all see time at the designated hitter spot. Franco may see some time at second while Seitzer can rest Thome and Williams at the corners when needed.

CASEY CANDAELE is a candidate for the utility infielder spot as is Fernandez. Our fans have already sold out Jacobs Field for '97, and our players are poised to provide another exciting season as we look to regain the AL Championship title.

